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MR. THAYER'S REJOINDER

SIR,—Mr. Bowen resorts to a quibble. He must know perfectly well that I know that any correspondence which he, as an employee, addressed to the State Department, went to Secretary Hay. All I asserted, and still assert, is, that without the consent of President Roosevelt and Secretary Hay, neither he nor any other diplomatic agent of the United States could have served as mediator for a foreign nation. Mr. Bowen wishes throughout to convey the impression that he was absolutely without superior. Some of the despatches printed in the Red Book for 1903, under the heading "Venezuela," will correct this impression. As to the Red Book itself, which Mr. Bowen appeals to as the beginning and end of all authority in diplomatic history, he surely cannot suppose that all his readers are as ignorant as he pretends to be of the character of the Red Book. The Red Book is a selected collection of the diplomatic documents of our State Department issued each year. It is neither complete, nor are the documents printed verbatim. In the very section referring to Mr. Bowen's transactions, I find certain despatches paraphrased, while certain others are not printed at all, as the footnotes warn the reader.

Now, as every person knows, the Secretary of State, or in England the Foreign Secretary, has confidential private letters from Ministers and Ambassadors, and he writes privately to them. These letters contain the real facts and the motives which form the basis of diplomacy. They do not go back to the archives of the State Department, but are kept by the Secretary or Ambassador who receives them. I have seen scores of such letters, and when Mr. Bowen, who has not seen them, as I know, accuses me of writing history on hearsay, I must smile at his effrontery. If he wrote no confidential letters to his chief, Mr. Hay, or received none, the inference must be that he was not regarded as a person who inspired confidence.

The public can have no interest in Mr. Bowen's opinion of my historical work. The point at issue, which he has consistently dodged since my *Life of John Hay* came out four years ago, is, whether President Roosevelt made up the story about forcing the Kaiser to arbitrate the Venezuela matter or not. Mr. Bowen thinks that President Roosevelt lied. I do not. The conflict, therefore, is between Roosevelt and Bowen, and I believe that the public, now and hereafter, which knows the two men, will credit Roosevelt.

President Roosevelt did many diplomatic strokes without consulting Mr. Bowen. He sent private letters to the German Kaiser, to the Russian Czar, and to the Mikado of Japan. I am very sure that Mr. Bowen never saw one of these letters. I do not think that he will find copies of them in the State Archives (unless they have recently been placed there). I have looked for them in vain in the Red Book; and yet, will Mr. Bowen assert that President Roosevelt did not write them, but merely lied about them?

Mr. Bowen wishes to destroy the value of Buenz as a corroborative witness, on the ground that Buenz in 1916 was imprisoned for fomenting German plots against the United States. By what rule of evidence would that vitiate Buenz's testimony in regard to Holleben and President Roosevelt given in 1903? Benedict Arnold was a

traitor in 1780; would that vitiate his competence to bear witness, on a wholly different matter, in 1765?

In closing, I wish to say that I believe that Mr. Bowen is perfectly sincere in thinking that he brought about arbitration in the Venezuelan matter. His work as mediator was his only title to fame, and I sympathize with the great chagrin he feels at having that title taken away. But evidently if he were not so obsessed with his own importance he would have learned how statesmen and diplomats conduct their confidential correspondence. He would have learned also how in many negotiations President Roosevelt took affairs into his own hands, and conducted them to a finish, even without consulting his Secretary of State, or leaving a trace of evidence in the official archives; he would have learned that the Red Book, like the English Blue Book, instead of being infallible or complete, merely contains what the officials who compiled it regarded as expedient that the public should know.

I trust that Mr. Bowen will perceive that he has no further business with me. His quarrel was, and is, with Roosevelt; and he took good care not to attack Roosevelt personally while he was living. I have no doubt that Roosevelt dead will be found by the American public more than a match for Mr. Bowen.

WILLIAM ROSCOE THAYER.

Magnolia, Mass.

COLOMBIA AND "BLACKMAIL"

SIR,—In the July number of *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*, in an article entitled "Chapters of Roosevelt's Life," Mr. William Roscoe Thayer says:

. . . he circumvented the attempt of the Colombian blackmailers to block our construction of the Canal. . . .

And:

German intrigue was also working in Bogota, and influenced the Colombian blackmailers in refusing to sign the Hay-Herran treaty with the United States

Why "Colombian blackmailers"? Is this the way Mr. Thayer writes history?

The *Century Dictionary* gives the following definitions:

Blackmail (noun): Extortion in any mode by means of intimidation, as the extortion of money by threats of accusation or exposure.

Blackmail (verb): To extort money or goods from, by means of intimidation or threats of injury of any kind, as exposure of actual or supposed wrong-doing.

Which was the victim of "intimidation or threats of injury"—the United States or Colombia?

If our present Senate should refuse to ratify the Treaty of Peace, with its League or Covenant of Nations, would its majority members be *American blackmailers*?

Was our treaty of May 8, 1871, with Great Britain, by which we secured millions for the depredations committed by the *Alabama* and other vessels, a "hold-up" or blackmail?

Article I of this treaty reads: